TWO ASSYRIAN APOTROPAIC FIGURINES COMPLEMENTING KAR. 298, REV. 4–7

BY

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University of California Publications in Semitic Philology
Volume 9, No. 7, pp. 383–384, plates 5 and 6

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
1930

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Volume 9, No. 7, pp. 383–384, plates 5 and 6
Issued June 30, 1930

University of California Press
Berkeley, California

Cambridge University Press
London, England

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The Babylonian collection of the University of California has been enriched by two terracotta figurines from Ashur, recently purchased in Baghdad. The well preserved pieces evidently formed a pair and belong together. Figures like these, made of tamarisk wood or clay, were set up and buried beneath floors of houses, ana sakap limnûti, "for the overthrow of the evil ones" (Zimmern, *Ritualtafeln,* No. 45, col. II, 12), to safeguard house and occupants from the machinations of every kind of evil spirit. It was customary to put these prophylactic figures in brick boxes before placing them in their destined positions.

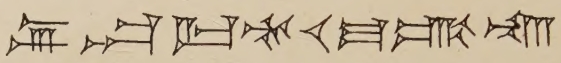
One figure represents the ḫagallu, the fish-man. Head and upper part of the body are modeled in human form. Beyond the conical-shaped cap with broad band which widens in front and comes to a point nearly at the top of the cap, protrudes the abundant crop of hair. The man is bearded. His right hand is fisted and shows an opening which evidently originally held some object which slightly damaged the beard when it was inserted into the clenched fist. The left arm is brought forward as is also the right, and the left hand acted as a support for the missing object. The lower part of the body is that of a fish. The scales are indicated by line incisions. On top of the fish-body is a small protuberance indicative of a fin. Within the ridges and line incisions remain traces of gypsum, showing that the entire figurine was formerly covered with this substance. The figure rests on a base which adapts itself to the shape of the body, but in front the base projects 7 mm. The figure measures in its greatest dimensions 135 mm. in length, 110 mm. in height, and 32 mm. in width.

The second terracotta pictures the suḫûru, the fish-goat. The upper part of the body shows a bearded goat depicted as kneeling on the right front leg while the left front leg is bent at the knee and rests with its hoof on the base, which has the same shape as the base of the fish-man. The body of the fish is similar to that in the first

figurine, but the back fin is less pronounced. This terracotta figure measures 140 mm. in length, 97 mm. in height, and 32 mm. in width. It was originally covered with a thin black paste of which traces are still preserved, especially on the left side and the base. What we should have expected, however, is a thin covering of gypsum.

The fish-man and the fish-goat, both of the brood of the chaos mother Tiâmat, are referred to in Zimmern, *Ritualtafeln,* No. 50, 8. The fish-man and the fish-goat are mentioned together in the Sinaherib inscription, KAH, No. 124, 19, 20. They are said to be made of copper, and each one is contained in a copper shrine.

The one-line inscription on the upper left side of the fish-goat connects our two figurines with the ritual text, VAT 8228, KAR. 298, rev. 4–7. The inscription reads:



ir-ba taš-mu-u ma-ga-ru, "Enter, favorable hearing, compliance."

In line 4 of VAT 8228, the traces of the text show clearly that we have to read suhûru. From this text we learn that the fish-goat figurine was to be placed "in the middle of the fence in the center of the court," while the fish-man was to be placed "in the center of the house, in the gate of the lower roof."

The ḫagallu, UCBC 1200

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The suhûru, UCBC 1201